

Blair County Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF/Act 137) Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Blair County Courthouse: Conference Room 4B

November 13, 2024

Present: Commissioner Amy Webster, Tricia Johnson, Scott Durbin, Jim Gehret, Jeanne Puskar, Susan Eberhart, Missy Gillin, Trina Illig, Wendy Melius and Jennifer Kensinger

Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the August 14, 2024 meeting were emailed to the Advisory Board members prior to today’s meeting.

Scott Durbin made the motion to accept the minutes as presented. Jeanne Puskar seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comment: *No public comments were made.*

Missy Gillin reviewed the AHTF Current Accounts as shown below:

Act 137 Account Balance

Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)	Operation Safe Space 5/25/23 Approved	Team Effort Committed Meeting 3/26/24 Approved	Lead Committed Meeting 12/13/18	Owner Occupied Rehab Meeting 3/12/21 3/28/24 Approved	1 st Time Homebuyer Commissioner Meetings 4/5/22, 5/5/22, 5/12/22, 5/27/22, 12/14/23 4/30/24	Sustainable Housing Program	Code Compliance Repair Assistance Program 5/14/2024 Approved	TOTAL
Allocation	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$3,000	\$150,000	\$50,000	
Paid Out as of 10/31/24	-\$20,000	\$20,000	\$49,726.20	-\$23,716.51	-\$18,000	-\$50,000	\$0	
Program Available BALANCE 10/31/24	\$0	\$0	\$273.80	\$26,283.49	\$0	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$176,557.29

AHTF Bank Statement Balance of 10/31/2024: \$402,738.55

AHTF Committed Pending Payments: \$176,557.29

AHTF Available Non-Committed Funds: \$226,181.26

AHTF Recording Fee Deposits (excluding interest)	
September 2023	\$7,150
October 2023	\$6,825
November 2023	\$6,591
December 2023	\$6,682
January 2024	\$5,941
February 2024	\$4,875
March 2024	\$4,420
April 2024	\$5,629
May 2024	\$6,253
June 2024	\$6,682
July 2024	\$6,396
August 2024	\$8,008
September 2024	\$6,994
October 2024	\$6,578

Demo Fund Current Account

Demolition Fund Bank Statement 10/31/24	\$434,372.47
Demolition Projects Committed Not Paid	\$0
Demolition Program Funds Available Non-committed	\$434,372.47
Pending Board Approval	\$0.00

Blight/Demolition Fund

- Missy included a list of approved demolitions in the agenda packet.
- There are not any pending projects.
- All projects are completed and paid.

Blight/Demolition Fund Discussion

- Trina reported that a meeting was held with Commissioner Burke on September 30, 2024.
- Trina asked the Board about locking down a specific match for the Demo funds or abolishing requiring any match to use the funds. Currently, the City of Altoona is the only one matching Demo funds. The City is using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to cover their match.
- Trina feels that municipalities are not utilizing the Demo funds due to the suggested match, which seems to equal out to 30%, even though that amount is not specifically stated in the Demo guidelines.
- Trina reached out to Cambria County and to Clearfield County. Cambria does not require a match. Clearfield does require a match, however, no specified amount is shown in their guidelines. Blair County's max amount given per demoed property is \$10,000. Cambria and Clearfield do not have a max amount. Trina said the Board could look at recommending increasing that amount.

- Trina informed the Board that on September 10, 2024, the City of Altoona sent a list of eight (8) properties that they would like demoed. They are offering a 50/50 match. The total, requested amount of funds that the City is asking for is \$40,846.50.
- Trina stated that since the City of Altoona uses CDBG funds to cover their part, that County CDBG funds would have to be available to municipalities, if a match is going to continue to be required.
- Scott thinks that a match should be required.
- Commissioner Webster suggested since the City of Altoona receives CDBG funding that they would have to offer a match to receive the funds, but the match would be waived for the municipalities that do not have their own CDBG funds. Trina informed everyone that the county administers the CDBG funds for 22 municipalities. The City of Altoona and Logan Township have their own CDBG funding.
- Trina does not think that it would be right to require the City of Altoona to match funds, if the county decides to waive other municipalities of doing the match.
- Jim Gehret suggested lowering the match requirement to perhaps 10 or 15%, for a limited time, to generate more interest from other municipalities other than the City. Scott asked if any interested municipalities did not move forward with a demo project due to a required match. Trina answered that Allegheny Township is the one township that did not want to do a match. Tyrone Borough did inquire about the funding to demo a garage, but at the time they did not own it, so they did not pursue it.
- Trina stated that the City and the County would like to aggressively go after properties on the repository.
- Trina shared two (2) reports:
 - September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023 – The Demo fund collected \$96,260. 4 properties were demoed totaling \$23,000. Two of those properties were on the county repository and required no match.
 - September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 – The Demo fund collected \$87,045. No monies were expended from the Demo fund.
- Trina added that if the match is waived that a municipal lien could be put on the property to possibly recoup any funding that would go back into the Demo fund.
- Trina stated that she is working with Sue Ammerman, Tax Claim Director, and Paul Shaffer, Highway Manager, in regards to the properties on the county repository.
- Commissioner Webster would like to give priority to the City to get rid of their excessive, blighted properties. She also stated that she is in favor of match by municipalities, however if a match is waived, due to the municipality putting a municipal lien on the property then the municipality should do all the necessary paperwork so that the county only has to award the money for the demo. Trina stated the City has already filed the necessary paperwork for their projects.
- Commissioner Webster asked if bids are requested for the demos. Trina answered, to date, that has not been a request for bids for the demo projects.
- Trina stated that an issue, for trailers on the repository, would be site access. Another issue that needs address regarding the repository trailers is that some of them are actually in good enough condition that they could be resold instead of demoed.

Jim Gehret made a motion to approve the request for \$40,846.50 from the Blight/Demolition Fund for use toward the demolition of eight (8) properties located in the City of Altoona. Scott Durbin seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried. This motion will be presented to the commissioners for their approval.

Scott Durbin made a motion to approve amending the Blight/Demolition fund guidelines to waive the required municipality match of funds to garner more interest from municipalities to apply for the funding. Jim Gehret seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried. This motion will be presented to the commissioners for their approval.

The Board can revisit this depending on the response to the proposed change of waiving the match.

Program Updates

First Time Home Buyer Program (Wendy Melius)

- Wendy has three (3) staffed trained, but does not have any applications yet.

Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program (Wendy/Trina)

- Monthly conference calls have been taking place between Center for Community Action (CCA) and Trina regarding weatherization and housing rehabilitation.
- Trina reported that the communication has been going well and that the two (2) programs share multiple clients.
- Wendy reported that CCA did complete one (1) job. CCA has to recertify six (6) referrals.
- Trina stated that Whole Home funds were prioritized for homeowners on the weatherization, deferral and codes violation list.

Operation Safe Space (Tricia Johnson)

- Trish stated that if the AHTF wants to allocate any money to Operation Safe Space that a motion would have to be made and approved by the board. Trish feels that Operation Safe Space does not technically meet the definition of the AHTF's mission.

Homeless Family Shelter Update (Lisa Hann)

- Shelter Update (Email update submitted by Lisa Hann):
 - Served 608 unduplicated individuals since opening February 2023
 - As of today, the shelter has 19 residents (3 men, 9 women, 7 children)
 - Trish added that she believes that all the shelter apartments are currently rented out.

Other Programs:

Lead Abatement Program (Trina Illig)

- No updates.

Owner Occupied Rehab – Trina Illig

- No updates.
- Trina's is no longer accepting Whole Home applications. Whole Home has a Request for Proposal (RFP) out right now for workforce development in the housing field for

\$75,000, which can be broken down into three (3) smaller grants or kept at one (1) larger one depending on how much is awarded. This is mandatory.

TEAMeffort – Scott Durbin

- Missy reported that TEAMeffort has been paid for 2024.
- Scott felt that waiting until February 2025, to approve a request for more funding for TEAMeffort for the Summer of 2025, was the best approach.

Sustainable Housing Program – Missy Gillin

- Missy that Greg Werstil reached out to her about a W-9, but she has not heard back from him in regards to the project that he was to complete since he had stated previously that he was unable to figure out how to make the numbers work to build new affordable housing. The timeframe to complete the project lapsed September 30, 2024.
- Susan Bonsell's project was completed and she was paid.
- \$100,000 remains in the Sustainable Housing Program.
- Trina suggested giving \$50,000 to the Land Bank to create affordable housing.
- Missy will send out the information and request applications be returned by no later than January 15, 2025. Two (2) \$50,000 awards are be available to create affordable housing.

Blair County Code Compliance Repair Assistance Program

- Missy stated that the program has had several applicants, but the biggest obstacle is getting licensed, insured contractors to give bids.
- One (1) project has been approved for the Code Compliance program and is being blended with Trina's Whole Home program.
- Missy received a call from the Hollidaysburg Borough's Codes Officer asking if removing a broken down motor home from a property would qualify for the funding, since it is a code violation. Scott felt that it should qualify for the funding, since it is a code violation. Once Missy receives all the required paperwork, she will submit it to the commissioners for their approval.
- Missy has received about six (6) applications.

Open Discussion

- Scott stated that his modular housing project on Lexington is underway.
- Trina added that the City Housing Authority reached out to her to see if there was any Whole Home funding available, which there is not.
- The warming center will reopen at the Overflow church beginning January 6, 2025 through March 2, 2025. Paid staff will manage the center.

Next Steps:

Revisit Demolition Fund Guidelines/Demo Projects

Sustainable Housing applications

Missy thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 12, 2025** at 8:15am in Conference Room 4B